

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Duck and Cover: Fear of the Atom

- Standard: I. Culture
II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
IV. Individual Development and Identity
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
VIII. Science, Technology and Society
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices
- Grade Level: 9–12 (analysis and evaluation, homework)
- Objectives: The student will:
- Describe ideas, thoughts, and feelings related to the atomic age
 - Explain expressions used by Dulles and Eisenhower in their concerns about the use of atomic weapons
 - Complete an atomic action sheet analyzing problems and solutions presented by Dulles and Eisenhower using the documents
 - Evaluate the role of all the “messages” used in the lesson
- Time: 2 class periods
- Materials: Documents: **1952** *A New Policy of Boldness*
1953 *Atoms for Peace*
- Resources: *Images: Duck and Cover*
- Exercises: Expressions of Concern in the Atomic Age
Atomic Action Sheet
- Duck and Cover film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0K_LZDXp0I
Atomic testing film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0K_LZDXp0I
- Procedures:

Setting the Stage

The United States held a monopoly on nuclear weapons and power after the use of the atomic bomb in Japan during World War II. But it was not to last. In 1949 the Soviet Union detonated their first device. Any future Cold War conflict might now be a nuclear war.

For the first time, Americans felt seriously threatened. The Department of Civil Defense made a series of films to inform Americans about the threat—and give them survival strategies. One of these films—perhaps the most famous of them all—was called *Duck and Cover*. Children practiced this drill at school and families were encouraged to build fall-out shelters. Every school, from pre-school to college, was required to have shelters for students as well.

Today this film is part of the National Film Registry and the Library of Congress declared the film to be historically significant. Children of the 1950s and 1960s still respond to the command “duck and cover,” and today’s tornado and disaster drills are a variation on the concept.

Government leaders also shared these concerns, but realized the value of nuclear weapons for national security and the promise nuclear energy held for the future. Secretary of State Dulles sketched out his “new policy of boldness” in the popular *Life* magazine, and President Eisenhower presented his vision of the coming “atomic age” to the United Nations.

Students will watch the films suggested and talk about the fears reflected in the films. They will read the documents and use an action sheet to understand the “atomic” talk and policies of the United States.

Pre Lesson

1. Print out the *Duck and Cover* images and have one on each desk as students arrive.
2. Load the You Tube clips listed above on your projection device.
3. Print out the exercise, *Expressions of Concern*.

Day One Procedures

1. The students will notice the images and ask questions. . .what shelter?
2. Ask them to take the “duck and cover” position and demonstrate how to get under the desk with head covered and holding on to one leg of desk or chair.
3. This will cause a stir of course and some questions. Answer their questions.

4. Once re-seated show them the *Duck and Cover* clip from the 1950s, asking them to record on the pack of their image sheet any thoughts, ideas and feelings they might have during the video.

5. Once the film ends discuss what they have written down. Explain that the policy of the United States changed after the Soviets detonated their first nuclear weapon. Now there was real concern for the safety of the nation and its people.

Students have now given their expressions of concern, but what were those of the nation's leaders.

6. Have the students assign themselves a number from 1 to 25 (either by row or seats) and then write their number on the back of the image sheet.

7. Distribute the resource, *Expressions of Concern* and tell them they are to explain the expression corresponding to the number they just wrote down. They are to explain the expression to the class and how it relates to the concern for the survival of the world in the atomic age.

8. Hand out the two documents and ask students to begin reading and marking the documents looking for the expression they are assigned.

9. This will take the rest of the period and if they do not finish ask them to return the completed homework at the next class period.

Day Two Procedures

1. Ask students to get out the documents, image sheet, and anything they have prepared to explain their expression.

2. Go over the first 15 expressions, which are all from John Foster Dulles, allowing about one minute for each response. Classmates can make notes on the *Expressions of Concern* sheet.

3. Stop and show the second film showing the testing of the nuclear weapons.

4. Ask students to again list their thoughts, ideas, and feelings on the back of the *Expressions of Concern* sheet.

5. Discuss their notes.

6. Continue with Expressions 16-25, which are from President Eisenhower.

7. As they finish, distribute the exercise, *Atomic Action* and ask them to work in pairs to use the documents to complete the exercise. Each person should contribute.

- 8.** At the bottom of the exercise is the word "Question." Ask them, in their final reflection, to answer this question: Were all the messages (films, speeches) expressing concern about the atomic age the same? Yes or No—and why?
- 9.** Collect their papers and have them put the "duck and cover" image in their notebooks.

Extension Activities:

- 1.** Use the film, *The Atomic Café*, in place of or in addition to *Duck and Cover*.
- 2.** There are many more examples of the atomic testing results on various web sites; students can look at these on their own.
- 3.** Conduct a follow-up discussion based on this cartoon talking about how the "Duck and Cover" phenomena might be applicable today. ■